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SUBJECT: CHURKIN CONTINUES TO SAY NO ON AUTOMATICITY

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro D. Wolff, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

CHURKIN CONTINUES TO SAY NO ON AUTOMATICITY

¶1. (C) Summary: During a June 18 meeting at the Russian Mission, Ambassador Churkin yielded no ground on Russia's objection to Kosovo independence unless agreed by Serbia. Churkin stressed that the recent Quint meeting in Paris had "left a bad taste" in Russia's mouth as it gave the impression that unilateral scenarios were being prepared; that automaticity on independence was a redline for Russia; that agreeing before Kennebunkport would be nice but was not a goal in itself; and that Russia hoped we could work from the language it proposed at the G-8 summit and come up with something agreeable to all. Ambassador Wolff underscored that automaticity was the core point for the U.S., as well. In response to a question, Churkin asserted that there were signs that the Serbs were becoming more cooperative, but that independence for Kosovo now would likely bring the radicals to power, taking Serbia farther away from the EU. Ambassador Wolff stressed that the path Russia was pointing to would place a huge weight on the Serbs and disappointment with them would increase because of a process destined to fail. Churkin insisted that he could not agree to language that made it look like Russia was duped or tied its hands for a new Council decision. Churkin expressed opposition both to meetings in the Coordinating and Drafting Group (CDG) and full Security Council format and said it would be better to keep talks bilateral for the moment. End summary.

Churkin Delivers Four Tough Points

¶2. (C) During a June 18 meeting at the Russian Mission, held at Ambassador Churkin's request, Ambassador Wolff and Churkin discussed recent developments on Kosovo. Welcoming Ambassador Wolff, Churkin said he had four points to deliver on instructions. Churkin stated that: 1) The Quint meeting in Paris had "left a bad taste" in Russia's mouth. Russia knew the format had been used before but coming at this juncture it left the impression that unilateral scenarios were being prepared. Furthermore, it would be absurd to continue Russian/U.S. bilateral discussions if Russia's concerns were being ignored, Churkin charged. 2) The Russian Mission was under instructions that "no automaticity" on independence was a redline for Russia. Churkin opined that automaticity tied into President Bush's statement in Albania on the inevitability of independence and undermined the whole idea of new status negotiations. He said he saw "no prospect for agreement before Kennebunkport" if automaticity were not resolved. 3) Coming to agreement before Kennebunkport would

be nice, but was not a goal in itself. Churkin said substance is more important than timing. 4) At the G-8 Russia had proposed language along the lines of "support any solution agreed by the parties and if no agreement is reached, the Security Council will take a new decision," but this was not accepted by partners. Churkin urged continued work on what kind of decision the Council would take and looking to see if other things could be discussed.

13. (C) Ambassador Wolff responded that automaticity was the core point for us, as well. He asked Churkin whether Russia had any indications that for the Serbs more negotiations could lead to anything other than broadly defined autonomy. Churkin alleged that we were seeing signs of serious preparations and pointed to Serbia's recent letter to SYG Ban that contained no reference to autonomy or the new constitution. It was unrealistic to think of Serbia re-imposing its authority on Kosovo, conceded Churkin, but, again "there is no going back from sovereignty," he said. Serb leaders do have interesting thoughts, he commented.

14. (C) Ambassador Wolff explained that independence was the only acceptable outcome for the Kosovar side while for the Serbian side it is inconceivable that any leader could ever agree to that independence. That meant the path Russia was pointing to could place a huge weight on the Serbs to agree to something that was politically impossible for them; disappointment with Belgrade would only increase, as we would have invested more time in a process destined to fail. This is unfair to them and we would end up in the same situation with even more bitter feelings.

15. (C) Churkin responded that we were acting as if the path of independence now will solve the problem. "An American consultant told me he thought this would bring the radicals

to power, taking Serbia farther away from the EU," said Churkin. This outcome could be more dangerous and traumatic for the Serbs that what you are proposing, he asserted. We cannot just have a perfunctory process that leads to Ahtisaari, Churkin continued, adding that Russia cannot "agree to language that makes it look like Russia was duped or tied our hands for a new Council decision." We have no new ideas to propose now, but are open to hearing yours, he concluded.

16. (C) Ambassador Wolff asked Churkin whether he envisioned any scenario whereby Russia's position on sovereignty would differ from Serbia's? Churkin responded that Russia wanted to do what was right. We cannot be more Serb than the Serbs and can make gentle recommendations, said Churkin, but "sovereignty is theirs to give." "We cannot tell them to take away part of their country," he added.

Russia Negative On CDG Or Full Council Meetings

17. (C) Ambassador Wolff explained that time does not play in favor of the Kosovars on this critical issue. "We are trying to explore translating certainty of outcome in a way that helps us to manage a real process for negotiations," he stated, adding that "without that certainty it is difficult to see any way around this." Ambassador Wolff noted that USUN had been sharing some of our elements with the Europeans and asked Churkin if he saw utility in a CDG meeting. Churkin responded negatively; he said a CDG meeting would be counterproductive and could leak immediately. Maybe when we are closer, said Churkin, but not now. Ambassador Wolff informed Churkin that we were considering moving again in the Security Council. Churkin stated that it would be better to keep discussions bilateral. Ambassador Wolff asked Churkin to share any further thoughts on a formula and promised to report the day's meeting, but said that we clearly appeared to be at an impasse.